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'He had not waited (lingered, dwelt) here long enough' (*Tabakokwele kuno pakalamba*). The present Paramount's attempt, only partially successful, to organize such a sacrifice in 1934 illustrated well the sort of motives that seem to have operated. He had reigned about ten years and was about to build what he described as his last village.[1] He had achieved an uneasy reconciliation with his *bakabilo* after their previous discontent and was thus enabled to count on their support for the ceremony; and the plague of locusts that had been decimating the land for two or three years and the simultaneous fall in the price of copper which restricted employment for his people made him decide that the 'land was hard' (*icalo nacikama*) and that the tribal spirits were refusing their blessings as a result of some years' neglect. It was one of the occasions of return to ritual previously abandoned which I have mentioned above.

These alternative ceremonies at the big chiefs' courts show the extent to which their economic function is linked with, and even dominated by, the political. The rites are associated with agricultural activities and sometimes follow a disaster threatening the land's prosperity, but they have greater significance as demonstrations of the chief's authority and supernatural qualities, on which beliefs the successful cultivation of the land ultimately depends.

The Morphology of the Rites.

The form of all these annual economic rites is strikingly similar. The same elements appear in each successive ceremony. They evidently reflect the people's basic beliefs as to the supernatural forces that control them and a number of their fundamental concepts, such as that of the magic power of sex, of fire, or of water. The double nature of the rites, both as enlisting the help of the ancestral spirits in particular economic enterprise and also in stressing the political authority associated with the ownership and cultivation of the land, is also clear. All the rites include:

(*a*) *The invocation of the imipashi.* The officiating priest makes request for some particular aid such as protection from the danger

[1] He told me 'Because I am adult now (fully grown) we shall settle down in this village now. They (the *bakabilo*) shall teach me all the old ceremonies' (*Pantu ninkula. Tukekala ku mushi nomba. Bakamfunda fyonse fya kale*)—a sentence which expresses the Bemba conception that full supernatural powers are only acquired by the chief when he has reached age and success.

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of tree-cutting, which is the individual concern of all those present, but he also stresses the omnipotence of the *imipashi* by asking them for such blessings as life (*ubumi*), fertility, health, and peace. The form of the prayers is interesting. There is no fixed formula laid down, but it is absolutely essential that the spirits should each be mentioned by name. By this means their help is invoked. At a tribal ceremony I noticed that Citimukulu always prayed with one of his senior *bakabilo* at his elbow to prompt him if he forgot one ancestral title out of the twenty to thirty dead chiefs to be called upon, and for a chief even to mention the names of his ancestors when walking to a ceremony was described to me as a form of prayer (*ukulumbula*). Headmen also call their ancestors by name when invoking them. Then again it is important that the dead should be named as having taught the particular activity upon which the living are about to engage, and this is especially the case at the tribal ceremonies. In fact one of the chief functions of this type of prayer, is, I think, to give traditional sanction to the gardening methods now practised and to confirm the people's belief in them by tracing their origin to the past. The words of one or two such prayers will illustrate what I mean. For instance, Mwamba, when invoking the *imipashi* at the beginning of his tree-cutting ceremony, prayed: 'We have come to you Great Mwambas.[1] It was you who left us the land. We beg for the power to work in it in the way you showed us you worked in the place from which you came (i.e. Lubaland). And we ourselves began to learn (i.e. how to cut trees) when we were still children, until at last we found we had learnt the way. We followed (lit. fell into) your words' &c. . . .[2] (Here follows the prayer for safety and success with the tree-cutting.) A similar reference to the *imipashi*, as teaching agriculture, was made by one of the 'wives of the relics', who told me she took first-fruits to the shrines of the ancestors with the words, 'We show the owners (i.e. of the food) who brought it with them from Buluba.'[3] All such prayers seem to give validity to the present methods of cultivation, and to pledge the ancestors to help descendants who are thus following in their footsteps. The form

[1] *Ba*—the plural of respect and also the plural indicating the number of dead chiefs.

[2] *Twaisa kuli imwe BaMwamba. Ni imwe mwatushile calo. Tulelomba ukubomba imilimo, ifyo mwatulangile ifyo mwalecita uko mwatulile. Nga ifwe twatalika ukusambilila twacili baice, twasuka twasambilila. Twaliponena amashiwi yenu.*

[3] *Tulelanga abene abafumine nafyo ku Buluba.*

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769 of the prayer also emphasizes the right of the priest to officiate. He bases his claim to speak on lineage alone, and hence he usually •771 calls the *imipashi* he is invoking by their kinship terms. For in- 796 stance, some begin: 'You my mother's brothers and my grandfathers!' (*Mwe Bayama na Bashikuiu!*); and I have twice heard a chief add a separate prayer to 'Our mothers' (*Banyinefwe*), that is to say, the ancestresses of the royal line. By such means the claims of the living on the dead are publicly stated, and also the rights of the headman or chief to the office he holds.

(*b*) *The blessing of the objects used.* Besides the initial prayers at the different ceremonies the chief object to be used in the subsequent economic activity, such as the axe for the tree-cutting or the seeds for the sowing, must be blessed. This is achieved by bringing it in contact with the magic power of sex. The axe or the seeds are given potency by being placed at the head of the bed (*ku mutwe*) on which the officiating priest and his head wife have intercourse on the night before the rite takes place. The magic [831] effects of such an act are difficult to explain without a full analysis of the Bemba ideas on sex, procreation, and their contagious effects on fire, sacred objects, and on certain human beings. Suffice it to say that the sexual act is thought to make the body hot (*umubili uakava*) and 'bad' (*ukuba ne fibi*),[1] and that the individual is then thought unfit to approach the ancestral spirits or to have contact with any sacred object such as the chiefs' relics, unless he has been ritually purified. But, nevertheless, an act of intercourse between a man and his head wife, followed by this special purification, is the means by which magic potency is conferred on the object placed at the head of the bed, and in some inexplicable way the blessing of the *imipashi* themselves is thereby invoked. Natives, who were usually shy in discussing the magic aspects of sex, would give in explanation some such phrase as '*Ni kufunge mipashi*' ('It is to soften or propitiate the spirits'), and one added that the reason why the chief had such power of blessing the axe or seeds was 'because of his chieftainship' (*ubufumu*, the abstract principle of chieftainship). And of the object blessed, another informant stated that new qualities had been conferred on it 'on account of the chieftainship, because the chief lies on top of it' (*umulandu ua*

[1] A condition expressed by a number of technical terms such as *ukutetema* (to be ritually impure) or by euphemisms such as *ukuba na kantu* (to have some little thing wrong with you).

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bufumu ico mfumu ilelalapo). The whole of this conception must be considered against the background of the people's belief in the supernatural powers of their chiefs, and the influence of his sexual capacities on the fertility of the land.[1]

(*c*) *The purification of the priest.* Since sex intercourse makes it impossible to approach the *imipashi* or to enter their shrines, the ritual purification of the officiating priest and his wife, after the blessing of the axe or seeds, is an essential act in each economic rite. It is one which is performed before every solemn prayer or sacrifice to the *imipashi*, before the founding of a new village, an inheritance ceremony, a death or the birth of twins, &c., either by the chief, the headman, or the commoner, as the case may be. In the case of a commoner or an ordinary headman, this rite of purification (*ukuwamya umubili*) is simple. The morning after the sexual act, the couple set on the fire the woman's marriage pot—a tiny clay pot made for her by her paternal aunt on her marriage—and they heat water in it. This the wife then pours over her husband's hands. Both then bathe in the river and return to the village, after which new fire must be lighted in the hut. Sex taboos are kept by the pair until the ceremony in question is over. In the case of the chief, and particularly the Citimukulu, this rite is, however, exceedingly complex. It involves the simultaneous ritual intercourse of the chief and the 'wife of the land' (*umukolo ua calo*), and the Cimba and the Cikutwe with their respective head wives in huts built specially for the purpose. Afterwards twelve or fifteen of the *bakabilo* must assist, each with his own hereditary part, in the purification ceremony and the lighting of the new fire. Without purifying his body the chief can never enter his *benye* house or use his powers over the land to the full, but the complication and expense of a rite which requires the simultaneous presence of so many officials is one of the reasons why the full ceremonial of tree-cutting or first-fruits described later is so rarely performed nowadays, when chiefs are impoverished and cannot always command the loyalty of their *bakabilo*.

(*d*) *The divination rite.* Except in the case of first-fruit rites, each ceremony, whether tree-cutting or blessing of seeds, is followed by some act of divination in which the intentions of the *imipashi* are revealed to their descendants. Here the element of individual doubt and uncertainty is apparent again. There are

[1] Cf. p. 249.

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several methods of divination used. The blessing of the object is itself a preliminary test of the kind since the dreams of the officiating priest as he lies, with the axe or the seeds at the head of his bed, are taken as omens. 'When you have fallen asleep the *imipashi* come to you and you dream good things. If you dream bad things you will not succeed.'[1] The dreams of a chief on this or other occasions are very important for the land. But additional divination rites are sometimes added, particularly in the case of tree-cutting. Hunting ordeals commonly follow the tree-cutting ceremonies, especially in Bisa country, and Citimukulu sent out a man with a gun and a couple of cartridges to try the luck of the land after his *ukutema* ceremony in 1934. The people are delighted and unusually sure of success if a female animal is killed, and say, 'We have found a grindstone' (*twasange libwe*), while if a male animal is killed, that is nearly as good an omen and is described as finding an axe (the man's food-producing implement). If no animal is seen at the nets then the tree-cutting goes on, but without the same hopes of good fortune. 'We go to try to see if we are going to work well' is a typical description of the procedure, and the whole use of the divination rite reflects the anxieties and hazards of traditional agricultural processes already described.

The Economic Cycle.

This analysis of the main elements of the Bemba agricultural ritual must lead to a description of the individual ceremonies and the extent to which they were still performed:

(*a*) *The tree-cutting rite.* In old-fashioned villages the headman performs the tree-cutting ceremony with all the inhabitants of the village accompanying him. In modern communities he tends to do the rite alone, or with his near relatives only, while the rest rely on such magic charms as they possess for their protection, and are described as 'cutting trees anyhow' (*cikomekome*). The older form of the rite will be described, since it is still performed in however abbreviated a version in the majority of Bemba communities. In such settlements the headman, when he has decided to begin the clearing of the bush and fixed the site of his garden, calls the elders of the village and his own immediate relatives to

[1] *Nga mulala mipashi isuma iaisa, mwalota fisuma. Mulote ifishiweme, fishilungama.* (Bad dreams are those concerning snakes, lions, fire, &c.)

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769 796 value'. But in Bemba society the ritual stress on the legal and political prerogatives of the chief is also prominent at the first-fruits ceremonies, and the harvest, as well as the tree-cutting, can be made the occasion of a big display of the Paramount's power.

(*f*) *Rain ritual.* Prayers for rain are rarely necessary in this area as the supply is usually ample, but when they occur the Citimukulu is alone responsible. I never heard of a territorial chief or a headman praying for rain, or an *nganga* asked to provide it by magic. The only means of obtaining rain is apparently to send an ox to the chiefs' burial grove in charge of one of the royal undertakers, and the ShiMwalule there sacrifices the beast at the shrine in the grove. One such sacrifice was apparently performed in 1930.

• 771 182 To conclude, the magico-religious rites of the Bemba were certainly an integral part of their whole economic system. The ceremonies gave an impetus to their ordinary agricultural activities, and enabled the chief to organize their efforts more effectively, and thus to support the whole machinery of tribal government. The performance of the ritual constantly emphasized the supernatural powers of the chief, both in his own person and by his right of access to the tribal spirits. On this deeply-seated belief in the attributes of their *mfumu*, economic incentives and the use of land ultimately depended. It is this faith which has been weakened nowadays with pronounced effects on the whole morale of the tribe, as far as agriculture is concerned. How far Christian ritual has taken the place of the old agricultural ceremonies I do not know. I have seen natives cross themselves before tree-cutting and sowing, and I believe that some missions hold church services for the blessing of the seeds, but it will remain a fact that the old Bemba ceremonial of ancestor worship put the control of the religious rites into the hands of the political and administrative authority of the tribe, while those of the Christian churches do not, and cannot, do the same, since no big chiefs have yet accepted Christianity.

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since the break-up of the whole settlement may become inevitable in such circumstances.

There are no other organized bodies of Europeans in this area —no big bodies of farmers or settlers, for instance. But it may be said that all Europeans are in a sense in a position of authority. They all have the sanction of wealth and the power of employing a following. All have the high social status that enables them to talk to a chief as an equal, or more usually as an inferior, and all are believed by the natives to be backed, whether right or wrong, by the administrative officers of the district however unjustifiably.

Besides these new authorities introduced into the political arena, the power of the Bemba chief is inevitably reduced by his economic position, which must have grown increasingly bad since the first days of European occupation. The Bemba rulers were never rich compared to a number of African potentates. Theirs is a poor country. They possess no cattle which could be converted to money under modern conditions; the ivory of their country no longer belongs to them, nor their mineral rights. Land has no financial value as yet, and the salaries given to chiefs have always been low compared to the income, say, of the paramount chief of the Barotse.[1] Added to this, the service on which the Bemba chiefs depended is cut down by half or more by the absence of men at the mines, and what remains is often given unwillingly. These chiefs never apparently exacted court fines as a regular thing, after the fashion of the cattle-owning Bantu, and have not yet put a levy on the earnings of men away at the mines, as has been done in some parts of South Africa.

In view of these facts, it may be asked how the power of the *Bena ŋandu* survived at all up till 1929, when a determined effort was made to restore it. Partly because of their closely knit kinship structure, but also, I think, because of the strength of the supernatural beliefs on which their authority was so largely based. These were certainly weakened by the introduction of Christianity and the prevention or discouragement of many tribal rites, but it is impossible to treat them as mere survivals at the present day. Even young men are affected by such beliefs. For much the same reasons, the chiefs' courts continued to function alongside of the

[1] The Barotse chief receives an annual subsidy of £1,700, together with £850 from the British South Africa Company and £1,500 from the Zambesi saw-mills, as compared to the £60 a year of the Bemba paramount.